

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CS
SUBJECT: VESCO CASE: COMMENTS BY PRESIDENT ODUBER

1. PRESIDENT ODUBER TOLD ME AUGUST 17 THAT HE HAS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT ROBERT VESCO IS UNDERGOING LIQUIDITY PROBLEMS. HE SAID THAT HE DEDUCED THAT VESCO BROUGHT WITH HIM TO COSTA RICA 30-40 MILLION DOLLARS OF LIQUID ASSETS. SOME 20 MILLION OF THIS WAS TIED UP IN VARIOUS ENTERPRISES OF PEPE FIGUERES, AND MOST OF THE REST WAS UNPRODUCTIVELY INVESTED. CONSEQUENTLY, VESCO WAS IN GREAT NEED OF CASH. ODUBER SAID THAT VESCO'S LAWYER HAD APPROACHED HIM, ODUBER, TO INQUIRE WHETHER SOME OF VESCO'S TIME DEPOSITS IN COSTA RICA COULD BE RELEASED EARLY. ODUBER ALSO SAID THAT VESCO WAS IN PROCESS OF SELLING EVERYTHING HE OWNED HERE, INCLUDING HIS HOME IN "CURRIDABAT" SECTION OF SAN JOSE.

2. IN FURTHER DISCUSSION OF VESCO'S PROBLEMS IN COSTA RICA, ODUBER SAID THAT NO COURT OR TRIBUNAL WOULD AWARD COSTA RICAN CITIZENSHIP TO VESCO BEFORE ELECTIONS OF 1978. CONSEQUENTLY, VESCO WAS NOW EXPLORING POSSIBILITY OF MOVING TO ANOTHER COUNTRY. HE HAD CHECKED OUT PANAMA AND PARAGUAY WITH UNCERTAIN RESULTS, BUT WAS NOW FOCUSING ON ITALY.

3. IN THIS LATTER CONNECTION, ODUBER REFERRED TO REPORTS THAT VESCO HAD RENOUNCED U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND HAD TAKEN
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UP ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP. DRAWING ON CONTENTS STATE 199241,

I TOLD ODUBER THAT TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE VESCO HAD TAKEN NO CONCRETE STEPS TO RENOUNCE U.S. CITIZENSHIP. I STATED THAT I WAS AWARE THAT HE HELD ITALIAN PASSPORT BUT THAT I WAS UNCERTAIN WHETHER HE WAS LEGALLY ENTITLED TO HOLD ONE. IN ANY EVENT, I TOLD ODUBER, USG WOULD PROBABLY PERSEVERE IN ITS REQUEST FOR EXTRADITION REGARDLESS OF WHERE VESCO RESIDES.

4. EARLIER IN CONVERSATION, ODUBER TOLD ME THAT GONZALO FACIO HAD COMMITTED MAJOR ERROR IN ALLOWING HENCHMEN OF JOSE FIGUERES TO BE THE FIRST TO ENDORSE HIS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY. ODUBER SAID THAT THE INITIAL ENDORSERS OF FACIO'S CANDIDACY WERE KNOWN IN PLN AS GROUP THAT HAD LED FIGUERES INTO HIS RECENT DIFFICULTIES, INCLUDING HIS ASSOCIATION WITH VESCO, HIS NEW PARTY GAMBIT AND HIS SHORT-LIVED CONSIDERATION OF A COUP. ODUBER SAID THAT RANK AND FILE OF PLN HAD REACTED NEGATIVELY TO THIS ENDORSEMENT OF FACIO'S CANDIDACY, CONCLUDING THAT FACIO WAS IN FACT VESCO'S CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT.

5. COMMENT: ODUBER'S STATEMENT THAT VESCO IS SUFFERING FROM A SHORTAGE OF CASH TIES IN WITH OTHER INFORMATION WE HAVE RECEIVED AND WHICH WILL BE REPORTED SEPARATELY. HIS VERY FLAT STATEMENT CONCERNING VESCO'S CHANCES OF BECOMING A CITIZEN IN 1977 IS NEW. THIS COULD REFLECT A PLN LEADERSHIP DECISION NOT TO ALLOW VESCO TO BECOME AN ISSUE IN THE 1977-78 CAMPAIGN, I.E., THERE MIGHT WELL BE AN AGREEMENT, TACIT OR OTHERWISE, BETWEEN ODUBER, FIGUERES, ET AL, AND VESCO WHEREBY VESCO WILL AT SOME POINT MOVE ELSEWHERE, AT LEAST FOR DURATION OF CAMPAIGN. ON OTHER HAND, WE HAVE BEEN MISLED BEFORE ON VESCO ISSUE, AND I AM NOT PREPARED AT THIS POINT TO RELY ON ODUBER'S STATEMENTS REGARDING VESCO'S POSSIBLE TRAVELS OR HIS CHANCES OF BECOMING A CITIZEN HERE IN 1977.

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